

Daniel's Message to the Masses

Scholars have long noted that the book of Daniel was written in two different languages: Aramaic (Daniel chapters 2-7) and Hebrew (Daniel chapters 1, 8-12). Aramaic was the language of the Neo-Babylonian (Nebuchadnezzar) and Achaeminid (Cyrus the Great) Empires both of which Daniel served under.

Daniel's Aramaic section, designed as a chiasm initially to the Babylonians and later to the Medo-Persians, introduced the existence of the sovereign rule of his personal God. Despite the power of Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus the Great and their foreign gods, Daniel's God was active in the kingdoms of men and was the authority behind Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus the Great.

Aramaic (Daniel chapters: 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7)

Prophecy of the Four Kingdoms (Dan 2: Nebuchadnezzar's great metal statue)

Trial of God's Faithful (Dan 3: Nebuchadnezzar sends Daniel's friends to the fiery furnace)

Prophecy to the Pagan King (Dan 4: Nebuchadnezzar is repentant)

Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise, exalt and honor the King of heaven, for all His works are true and His ways just, and He is able to humble those who walk in pride. (Dan 4:37)

Prophecy to the Pagan King (Dan 5: Belshazzar is unrepentant)

Trial of God's Faithful (Dan 6: Darius sends Daniel to the lions' den)

Prophecy of the Four Kingdoms (Dan 7: Daniel's Four Beasts from the sea)

Examining the Hebrew and Aramaic sections further, it is worthwhile to note a contrast. Throughout the Hebrew section, there is only one mention of God's sovereignty over nations.

God gave Nebuchadnezzar Jerusalem and the nation of Judah.

In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. The Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the vessels of the house of God; and he brought them to the land of Shinar, to the house of his god, and he brought the vessels into the treasury of his god. (Dan 1:1-2)

In contrast, the Aramaic section has several explicit passages about the sovereign power of God and the fate of Believers. These passages, combined with the chiasm, send a very strong message about the real existence of God against the current pagan beliefs of the Babylonian and Medo-Persian Empires.

God determines when a king will have his kingdom taken away and when another may receive a kingdom.

It is He who changes the times and the epochs;
He removes kings and establishes kings;
He gives wisdom to wise men
And knowledge to men of understanding. (Dan 2:21)

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God gave Nebuchadnezzar his kingdom and power of dominion.

You, O king, are the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, the strength and the glory; and wherever the sons of men dwell, or the beasts of the field, or the birds of the sky, He has given them into your hand and has caused you to rule over them all. You are the head of gold. (Dan 2:37-38)

The king answered Daniel and said, "Surely your God is a God of gods and a Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, since you have been able to reveal this mystery." (Dan 2:47)

Daniel's God is greater in authority and power than Nebuchadnezzar and his gods.

If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up. (Dan 3:17-18)

Nebuchadnezzar responded and said, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, who has sent His angel and delivered His servants who put their trust in Him, violating the king's command, and yielded up their bodies so as not to serve or worship any god except their own God." (Dan 3:28)

God gives kingdoms to whomever He desires including the lowest of men.

This sentence is by the decree of the angelic watchers
And the decision is a command of the holy ones,
In order that the living may know
That the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind,
And bestows it on whom He wishes
And sets over it the lowliest of men. (Dan 4:17)

Daniel's God will take away Nebuchadnezzar's authority during his mental illness but preserve his kingdom.

this is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the Most High, which has come upon my lord the king: that you be driven away from mankind and your dwelling place be with the beasts of the field, and you be given grass to eat like cattle and be drenched with the dew of heaven; and seven periods of time will pass over you, until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes. And in that it was commanded to leave the stump with the roots of the tree, your kingdom will be assured to you after you recognize that it is Heaven that rules. (Dan 4:24-26)

God speaks directly to Nebuchadnezzar and takes his authority away by illness as Daniel prophesized.

While the word was in the king's mouth, a voice came from heaven, saying, "King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is declared: sovereignty has been removed from you, and you will be driven away from mankind, and your dwelling place will be with the beasts of the field. You will be given grass to eat like cattle, and seven periods of time will pass over you until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes." Immediately the word concerning Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled; and he was driven away from mankind and began eating grass like cattle, and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair had grown like eagles' feathers and his nails like birds' claws. (Dan 4:31-33)

God restores Nebuchadnezzar's authority to rule after he acknowledges the sovereignty of Daniel's God.

But at the end of that period, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever;
For His dominion is an everlasting dominion,
And His kingdom endures from generation to generation.
All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing,
But He does according to His will in the host of heaven
And among the inhabitants of earth;
And no one can ward off His hand
Or say to Him, "What have You done?"
At that time my reason returned to me. And my majesty and splendor were restored to me for the glory of my kingdom, and my counselors and my nobles began seeking me out; so I was reestablished in my sovereignty, and surpassing greatness was added to me. Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise, exalt and honor the King of heaven, for all His works are true and His ways just, and He is able to humble those who walk in pride." (Dan 4:34-37)

God takes away the Babylonia Empire from Nebuchadnezzar's grandson Belshazzar.

Now this is the inscription that was written out: "MENĒ, MENĒ, TEKĒL, UPHARSIN." This is the interpretation of the message: "MENĒ"—God has numbered your kingdom and put an end to it. "TEKĒL"—you have been weighed on the scales and found deficient. "PERĒS"—your kingdom has been divided and given over to the Medes and Persians." (Dan 5:25-28)

The reality of Daniel surviving the lions testifies to Cyrus the Great the sovereignty of Daniel's God even extending to a lions' den.

Then Darius the king wrote to all the peoples, nations and men of every language who were living in all the land: "May your peace abound! I make a decree that in all the dominion of my kingdom men are to fear and tremble before the God of Daniel;
For He is the living God and enduring forever,
And His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed,
And His dominion will be forever.
He delivers and rescues and performs signs and wonders
In heaven and on earth,
Who has also delivered Daniel from the power of the lions." (Dan 6:25-27)

God's sovereign authority is seen through the imagery of heaven stirring up the great sea producing four beasts that represent world empires, the first of which Daniel and his peers are currently experiencing.

In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon Daniel saw a dream and visions in his mind as he lay on his bed; then he wrote the dream down and related the following summary of it. Daniel said, "I was looking in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea. And four great beasts were coming up from the sea, different from one another. The first was like a lion and had the wings of an eagle. I kept looking until its wings were plucked, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand on two feet like a man; a human mind also was given to it. And behold, another beast, a second one, resembling a bear. And it was raised up on one side, and three ribs were in its mouth between its teeth; and thus they said to it, 'Arise, devour much meat!' After this I kept looking, and behold, another one, like a leopard, which had on its back four wings of a bird; the beast also had four heads, and dominion was given to it. After this I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrifying and extremely strong; and it had large iron teeth. It devoured and crushed and trampled down the remainder with its feet; and it was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns. (Dan 7:1-8)

God gives an everlasting kingdom to His Son.

I kept looking in the night visions,
And behold, with the clouds of heaven
One like a Son of Man was coming,
And He came up to the Ancient of Days
And was presented before Him.
And to Him was given dominion,
Glory and a kingdom,
That all the peoples, nations and men of every language
Might serve Him.
His dominion is an everlasting dominion
Which will not pass away;
And His kingdom is one
Which will not be destroyed. (Dan 7:13-14)

God indicates that Believers will receive and possess the everlasting kingdom. All dominions will be subject to the everlasting kingdom of the Son of God.

But the saints of the Highest One will receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, for all ages to come. (Dan 7:18)

Then the sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him. (Dan 7:27)

Even the most powerful human ruler cannot contest with God.

I kept looking, and that horn was waging war with the saints and overpowering them until the Ancient of Days came and judgment was passed in favor of the saints of the Highest One, and the time arrived when the saints took possession of the kingdom. (Dan 7:21-22)

But the court will sit for judgment, and his dominion will be taken away, annihilated and destroyed forever. (Dan 7:26)

Because Daniel constructed a second chiasm in the Hebrew section of his book, his Aramaic message was clearly intended for non-Believers of the Babylonian and Achaemenid empires who might have heard the reading of his book. Daniel's message to non-Believers still applies today: God is real and has the supreme authority of actively ruling over all governments.

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